TORNADO OF JANUARY 31, 1908.

By W. S. BELDEN, Section Director. Dated Vicksburg, Miss., February 17, 1908.

A tornado of remarkable energy and duration formed in the eastern portion of Jefferson County, Mississippi, at about 1:45 p. m., January 31, 1908, and moved in an easterly and east-northeasterly direction across Copiah County and to central Simpson County, covering a total distance of about 60 miles in approximately one hour and forty-five minutes.

So far as could be learned the tornado was destructive thruout its entire course, and its path varied from 100 yards to one-half mile in width. Seven people were reported killed by the storm, and thirty injured, and the value of property destroyed was conservatively estimated at $100,000. Fortunately the country thru which it past is sparsely settled, otherwise the loss of life would have been much greater.

During the forenoon of January 31, fresh to brisk southerly winds and cloudy weather, with occasional light showers, prevailed over Mississippi in connection with a large barometric depression central over Oklahoma at 7 a. m. Toward noon the temperature rose rapidly over southern Mississippi, reaching a maximum near or above 70°. At Vicksburg the barometer fell steadily until 1:30 p. m., when the reading was 29.64 inches, and a few minutes after 2 p. m. the wind veered to west and attained a maximum velocity of 41 miles per hour at 2:13 p. m.

The tornado cloud was first seen passing over Delmar shortly before 2 p. m., moving in an easterly direction. It appeared black and was attended by a high wind, heavy rainfall and considerable hail.

Observers who saw the destructive cloud generally described it as being black and funnel-shaped, and the noise emanating from it was referred to as resembling the sound made by a heavily loaded freight train running at a high rate of speed. At some places near the path of the storm the thunder and lightning were severe, while at other places they were only moderate, The rainfall was generally heavy, especially just after the passage of the tornado; and many places reported a light fall of hail.

At 2 p. m. the tornado past close to Union Church in southeastern Jefferson County, and was described as follows by Prof. A. C. Wharton at that village:

> During the morning and forenoon of the 31st the sky was overcast and the temperature rose, reaching 71°. Toward noon the clouds thickened and grew darker, especially along the northern and western horizon. Just before 2 p. m. they became very threatening and soon attention was attracted by the roar of distant winds. The clouds were in tumultuous agitation in the west and were rapidly driven in our direction. Then the funnel-shaped cloud became visible, and this, together with the hoarse bellowing of the now nearby wind, apprised us that we were witnessing a tornado. It passed within about 200 yards of us, apparently from a due westerly direction, and it was accompanied and followed by torrents of rain. We saw trees uprooted, or snapped off midway of the trunk, and noticed much small débris flying thru the air, torn from trees and house tops. From our first observation until it had swept by us was, I think, not over one and one-half or two minutes. Altho its path was nearly one-half mile wide, its most destructive energy was confined to a track about 300 or 400 yards wide. Observers who were watching the storm from points just outside its path, reported that buildings were hidden from view by a momentary darkness, when enveloped by the whirl. On the almost instantaneous disappearance of the smoke-like veil, such buildings were seen to be totally destroyed. The darkness, according to them, was apparently caused by clouds being drawn down in the vortex until they came into literal contact with the ground. The number of buildings destroyed within a mile of here was large; most of them were of small value, being negro cabins, barns, etc. Nobody was fatally hurt.

After passing Union Church the tornado moved east-northeast, plowing its way across fields and thru woodlands, demolishing fences, trees, cotton houses, negro cabins, plantation homes, cotton gins, saw mills, etc. It reached Homochitto at 2:20 p. m. and ten minutes later it was mowing a path thru the Bowerton neighborhood. Mr. A. M. Millsaps, postmaster at Bowerton, stated that it was the most destructive storm that ever visited this community and that all stock in the path of the tornado were killed. He reported that a tenant house on his farm was entirely blown away and no part of it had been found; there were five grown negroes in this house at the time of this occurrence and not one of them received a scratch.

The heaviest losses occurred at Martinsville which was struck at 2:45 p. m., the path of the tornado crossing the railroad one-half mile north of the depot. Twelve families were left homeless, and it was in this place that six of the seven persons killed met death.

Continuing its course in a nearly straight line the funnel-shaped cloud continued its work of devastation, passing north of Ashley and crossing the Pearl River at Georgetown, where it was reported as being low on the ground. Sixteen people were injured at Georgetown.

In the vicinity of Bowers at about 3:30 p. m., the tornado lost its destructive violence, but the rainfall was very heavy in that section causing small streams to overflow their banks. Many places in central and western Simpson County, some as far as twelve miles from the storm track, reported the atmosphere to be filled with leaves, twigs, and small branches of trees.

It was the most destructive atmospheric disturbance that has visited Copiah County since the Beauregard tornado of 1883, in which nearly 100 people were reported to have been killed.

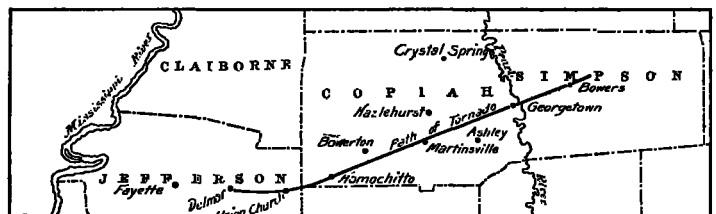

FIG. 1.—Path of tornado in southeastern Mississippi.

THE WEATHER OF THE MONTH.

By Mr. P. C. DAY, Assistant Chief, Division of Meteorological Records.

PRESSURE.

The distribution of mean atmospheric pressure for March, 1908, over the United States and Canada, is graphically shown on Chart VI, and the average values and departures from the normal are shown for each station in Tables I and III.

Mean pressure above the normal for March prevailed over nearly all portions of the United States and apparently over the greater part of Canada, the only exception being a small area including the upper Mississippi Valley and the western and northern portions of the Lake Superior district, where average pressure slightly below the normal was maintained.

The mean pressure ranged from .10 to .15 inch above the normal over the Atlantic and middle and north Pacific coast districts, maintaining average values above 30.20 inches over northern California and western Oregon.

There was a general increase in pressure from that of the preceding month on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, the increase along the Pacific coast amounting to more than .10 inch. Over all interior districts of the United States and Canada the average pressure was less than that for February, 1908.

The general distribution of the more or less permanent areas of high and low pressure was such as to give prevailing southerly winds over Texas, the middle and lower Mississippi